

BRUNSWICK SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

Playground Subcommittee

Kate Furbish Elementary School

MINUTES

For Thursday, January 10, 2019

Present: Paul Perzanoski (superintendent), ~~Steve Ciembroniewicz~~ (principal), Jeanie Doughty, ~~Tracey Peck-Moad, Steve Walker~~, Adelaida Gaviria, ~~Lisa Martin~~, Jeanne Baker Stinson (chair), Nathan Hintz (vice-chair – see minutes!), ~~Matt Pitzer~~ (PDT representative), Laura Newman (consultant for RFQ process)

1. **Minutes** were accepted without change.
2. Jeanie Doughty reminded us that we need a **new vice-chair** and that it really should be someone who is on the building committee so they can make reports to the larger committee when appropriate. **Nathan Hintz** volunteered. Thank you, Nathan!
3. Jeanne Bee distributed copies of Laura Newman's proposed **contract** and shared with the group the necessary additions (who would be responsible for payment, who would sign the documents, how would we make changes to the contract if necessary). All approved.
4. **Laura Newman** began her portion of the meeting with a **visioning exercise** – we were to think very specifically of a place where we liked to play in our earliest memories. We shared with each other and then she shared with us that when adults think back there are some very common categories that sparked joy:
  - a. Not fancy
  - b. Children were in control
  - c. Not big
  - d. "hiding" in plain sightPerhaps these themes come up because of risk? Or independence? One thing is sure – our view of playgrounds as an adult is very different than a child's view.
5. Laura then shared a little of her professional background – she was a teacher, but almost and architect. She has a recent Quimby grant to work on writing a guide for developing quality outdoor play spaces for young children. She has also been chair of the playground committee for her children's school. (For more on her impressive background please refer to the resume she shared as we were investigating how to get help writing our FRQ.)
6. She took some quotes from committee members about why THIS kind of playground that will help inform the writing of the proposal.
7. She suggested that there is a role to be played (by the committee? With help from her?) for "**case-making**". We need to be sure that we are educating the community (including staff) about what natural playgrounds look like, how they function, and why they are so important. The childcare and Nature Network (for one) has a good flyer that she has sometimes shared with families. (For something similar that Laura sent since the meeting see the attached "benefits of connecting children with nature.")

8. Finally Laura shared a brief version of a **power point presentation** with pictures and facts. This is a very visual learning process, she says. People really have to see it to imagine what you mean.
- a. Studies indicated that traditional, purchased equipment is unoccupied 87% of the time playgrounds are in use, occupied 17% of the time, but used as intended (i.e. going down slides only) 3% of the time. (As an aside -- this equipment is very expensive for the use it gets.)
  - b. Always keep in mind that on a playground what matters is how it is used and feels to the children – not to us!
  - c. One of the reasons that traditional equipment looks so “neat” is that is designed so that children cannot change it “equipment will provide the aesthetic of neatness simply because you can’t do anything to it!”
  - d. Standard equipment lacks “affordances” -- another way to say that it can’t be changed and vary with a child’s need. Nature is place based, diverse, reflective of the seasons, and filled with texture and colors.
  - e. The provision of **loose parts** (naturally occurring – like sticks and acorns which are never-the-less planned for) as well as those brought into the environment will be important. (See below for Jeanne Bee’s explanation.)
- “In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kinds of variables in it.” Simon Nicholson, an architect interested in spaces for children, developed this idea, which he called “The Theory of Loose Parts” in 1972. This theory is still a standard design principle used in creating both indoor and outdoor environments for young children. See if the following quote strikes a chord!
- “Creativity is for the gifted few: the rest of us are compelled to live in environments constructed by the gifted few, listen to the gifted few’s music, use the gifted few’s inventions and art, and read the poems, fantasies, and plays by the gifted few. This is what our education and culture conditions us to believe, and this is a culturally induced and perpetuated lie.”
9. Our next meeting will be Thursday, February 14, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. in Room 117 of the Town Hall.